LEWIS ALBERT SAYRE.

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with Compliments of
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EMINENT MEDICAL MEN OF THE DAY.

LEWIS ALBERT SAYRE.

THE eminence to which this famous representative of the medical profession of New York has attained, stands as the sum of two factors that have been conspicuous all through his career: A native genius for this particular work, that has kept him in it against all diverting calls, and a capacity for mental and physical labor that has brought the best possible results, whether in study, investigation, or the application of knowledge in actual practice. Men may leap to fame in some professions or occupations in a single hour; in that of medicine, years of proved capacity, and a first call that might almost be said—as in the ministry—to have come from a voice higher than any of earth, are the essentials to such fame as a reputable man would have. Such recognition, in its best form, has long since come to Dr. Sayre, and the people know that it is deserved.

Lewis A. Sayre was born at Bottle Hill—now Madison—Morris county, New Jersey, on February 29, 1820. He came of a family long and honorably known in that section of the country, his grandfather, Ephraim Sayre, having been a quartermaster in the Revolution, and a devoted patriot, at whose house Washington made his headquarters previous to the battle of Springfield. His father, Archibald Sayre, was a wealthy farmer of Morris county, prominent in local affairs, and a worthy member of the community. The son received his primary education at the local academy, and was subsequently placed under the tuition of a cousin, Edward A. Stiles, a graduate of Yale, and, at a later period, superintendent of public education for New Jersey, who at that time presided over Wantage Seminary, at Deckertown, New Jersey. Young Sayre spent two years at that institution, and then went to live with an uncle, David A. Sayre, a banker, in Lexington, Kentucky. He attended Transylvania University, and after passing through the full course of study, was graduated, in 1839.

His uncle had hoped that he would devote his life to the ministry, but the gifts of nature, and a set purpose, drew him in another direction. Medicine was his ambition, and going east again

he began its study, under Dr. David Green, of New York. He then entered the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and in 1842 received the degree of Doctor of Medicine, presenting, at graduation, a thesis on "Spinal Irritation," that was recognized as an evidence of unusual ability, and was published in the *Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery*.

Dr. Sayre immediately received the appointment of Prosector of Surgery, under Prof. Willard Parker, in the institution from which he had just graduated, and in 1852, being compelled to resign because of his extensive practice, he was appointed Emeritus Prosector. In 1853 he was appointed surgeon to Bellevue Hospital, and in 1859 surgeon to the Charity Hospital on Blackwell's Island; and of this institution he became consulting surgeon in 1873. He was one of the prime movers in the organization of the Bellevue Hospital Medical College in 1861, and upon the formation of its faculty was made professor of Orthopædic Surgery and Fractures and Luxations, and afterward of Clinical Surgery, which chairs he yet fills.

Dr. Sayre was also one of the founders of the New York Pathological Society, and active in the formation of the New York Academy of Medicine, and the American Medical Association, and was elected vice-president of the latter in 1866, and president in 1880. The address delivered by Dr. Sayre at the thirty-first annual session held at New York in June of that year, and published in the transactions of the association, is a model of its kind, and illustrative of his views upon important questions, and his terseness and clearness of expression.

In 1866 Dr. Sayre was appointed Resident Physician of the city of New York, and made great efforts for the improvement of the hygienic conditions of the city. His reports to the Board of Health upon cholera, compulsory vaccination, drainage, sewerage, and other questions of vital import, show a careful consideration of the best interests of the community, and a thorough knowledge of the subject of hygiene.

In 1876, Dr. Sayre was appointed by the American Medical Association a delegate to the International Medical Convention, held at Philadelphia, in the same year. In that learned body he read a paper on "Morbus Coxarius" or hip-joint disease, having been the first American surgeon who performed the operation for the remedy of this affection, with a successful result. Dr. Sayre also at this time performed the operation before the congress, at the conclusion of which Prof. Lister remarked, "I feel that this demonstration would of itself have been a sufficient reward for my voyage across the Atlantic." His first operation was performed in 1854, and reported in the *New York Journal of Medicine*, for January, 1855. Although others had tried before him, this was the first successful operation in America, and was, indeed, a success in every respect, the deformity being

slight, and motion perfect. He has since performed this difficult operation seventy-three times.

In 1871, Dr. Sayre made a visit to Europe, and widened and extended his professional fame upon that side of the sea. By special invitation, he lectured upon hip-joint disease and its remedy before several medical societies, who extended a warm welcome, and greeted his demonstrations with marked enthusiasm.

Of late years he has given much attention to the treatment of Potts' disease, and lateral curvature of the spine. His method being by suspension of the body, and the application of plaster-of-Paris bandages, in Potts' disease, from which the most astonishing results have been obtained. In lateral curvature the same treatment with the addition of proper gymnastic exercises, is followed by the greatest success.

In 1877 he was appointed by the American Medical Association, a delegate to the British Medical Association, held at Manchester, England, in the same year. The fame of his wonderful success in the healing of spinal affections had preceded him, and, as upon former occasions, he was invited to lecture before the leading medical societies and at the principal hospitals. In London he gave lectures upon, and demonstrations of, his mode of treatment, at the University College Hospital, Guy's, St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas' and the Royal Orthopædic. He subsequently accepted invitations from Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Cork, at each of which places he lectured and gave demonstrations, being afforded abundant opportunities for public tests of the value of his mode of treatment and appliances, and being greeted with great cordiality by his professional brethren. At one of his lectures before the British Medical Association, he received the most flattering acknowledgements of that body, in an editorial comment by the *British Medical Journal* of August 18, 1877, as follows :—

"Resolutions were carried by acclamation warmly thanking him for the generous and devoted course which he pursued in spending so large an amount of time and trouble in bringing under the notice of the profession in this country the methods and details of proceedings, by which he carried out his treatment of angular and lateral curvature of the spine, which constitutes a new era in that department of surgery, and of which the already proved success entitles us to say that this method of treatment will prove an inestimable boon to thousands of persons now and hereafter."

The *Lancet*, of July 4, 1877, in concluding a most complimentary notice of his demonstrations and lectures at the University College Hospital of London, said :

"We are not blind to the fact that much of the success obtained is due to Dr. Sayre's own rare physiological and mechanical skill, but his principles are as sound physically as their application is mechanically expert, and we thank him most heartily for the trouble he

has taken in England to illustrate and enforce them."

A correspondent of the *Medical Record*, September 5, 1877, speaking of Dr. Sayre's demonstration at Manchester, says: "He spoke an hour and a half, in a manner which delighted these men amazingly. They expressed their gratification in the most complimentary terms which could be employed. They declared, and with great earnestness, that Prof. Sayre, by his lectures and demonstrations, had effected a permanent revolution in the surgical treatment of spinal deformities, and the unanimous thanks of the Association were tendered him amid applause which was little less than deafening."

While abroad upon this occasion Dr. Sayre prepared "An Illustrated Treatise on Spinal Disease and Lateral Curvature," which he dedicated to the medical profession of Great Britain, in grateful acknowledgement of their generous and cordial reception.

As a lecturer, Dr. Sayre's style is very vigorous and clear, terseness and simplicity adding to its impressiveness, while his ready logic and power of illustration, with his rich fund of humor and fancy, stamp him as one peculiarly endowed for imparting instruction. His many professional writings are marked by the same characteristics, and seldom fail to convey the full meaning of the author.

The following are some of his principal contributions to medical literature:

"Chorea induced by Mental Anxiety." "Cases of Chronic Abcess in the Cellular Tissue of the Peritoneum." "Spina Bifida, the Tumor removed by Ligature." "Case of Perforation of the Rectum, followed by an extensive Recto-Faecal Abcess and Caries of the Coccyx, and Sacrum." "Exsection of the Head of the Femur and Removal of the Upper Rim of the Acetabulum for Morbus Coxarius." "Treatment of Croup by Inhalation of Steam." "Lead Palsy from the Use of a Cosmetic." "Mechanical Treatment of Chronic Inflamation of the Joints of the Lower Extremities." "Partial Paralysis from Reflex Irritation caused by Congenital Phymosis." "A simple Dressing for Fracture of the Clavicle." "On Anchylosis." "Clinical Lectures on Disease of the Hip-Joint." "Spinal Anæmia, with Partial Paralysis and Want of Co-ordination from Irritation of the Genital Organs." "Report on Fractures." "Report on Potts' Disease, or Caries of the Spine treated by Extension and Plaster-of-Paris Bandage." "On Disease of the Knee-Joint." "On the Deleterious Results of a Narrow Prepuce and Preputial Adhesions." "Spondylitis and Rotary Lateral Curvature of Spine." "On the Necessity of Cutting Contractured Tissues in Cases of Deformity before traction is attempted." Other papers than these might be mentioned, but enough have been named to show the variety of his surgical labors, and the width of the field in which he has so successfully worked.

Dr. Sayre has also published "A Practical Manual of the Treatment of Club-foot," which is highly esteemed and has already passed through several editions' and "Lectures on Orthopædic Surgery and Diseases of the Joints," a large volume of some five hundred pages, illustrated by nearly three hundred wood cuts, which is regarded as the leading authority in that department of surgery, and which has not only reached its second edition, but has been translated into French and German, and is now being translated into Spanish. Some years ago, the *British Medical Journal* (which is probably the highest authority recognized by the medical world), in speaking of a recent German translation of this work, said :—

"Dr. Sayre's methods have now such universally recognized currency and value throughout English-speaking countries, and are so well known and largely practiced throughout Europe, that it is surprising these valuable lectures have not before been translated into German. Time, which tries all things, has set its seal of emphatic and general approval both on the principles and methods which Dr. Sayre has ingeniously devised, ably illustrated and successfully carried into practice.

"He has removed a great mass of painful, tedious and almost incurable complaints into the region of curable and easily managed affections. He has substituted a simple and practical method, within the reach of every practitioner, for costly, complicated and heavy mechanical devices which were accessible only to the few, and which only imperfectly and occasionally fulfilled their objects. Few men have in their generation accomplished so much for the relief of humanity, and his name will go down to posterity, with that of Marion Sims, as among the most distinguished benefactors whom the American medical profession has produced for the glory of medicine and the good of mankind during this century."

Dr. Sayre's wonderful success is not only recognized abroad, but tributes of a high character are paid him continually here at home, in these later days. Out of the many that might be chosen, we select one, from the presidential address, delivered by Dr. E. H. Bradford, before the Orthopædic Association, and published in the *Boston Medical Journal* of September 26, 1889. After giving a history of orthopædic surgery from the beginning, he said :

"It is scarcely necessary to mention the name of Dr. Sayre in connection with the subject of orthopædic surgery. His fame in this regard is world-wide ; one achievement alone would be sufficient for his renown—the well-known plaster corset; but it is not for this, or for his able advocacy of excision, for which alone are due our special thanks, so much as to the one great fact of the influence he has excited. It is to him we owe the wide-spread nterest which brings help to us from all over the country. Orthopædic surgery is no longer—thanks to the energy

of Dr. Sayre, his brilliancy as a writer and a teacher—a neglected branch of surgery. The surgeon no longer looks upon the treatment of orthopædic cases as a forlorn hope of despairing surgical duty, or as a matter to be relegated to the commercial instincts of the maker of trusses. . . . Dr. Sayre has not only promoted the cause of the treatment of deformities; he has broadened the field of general surgery."

He is also the inventor of several instruments which have proved efficient aids to the surgeon, among which is the uvulatome, club-foot-shoe, scrotal clamp, flexible probe, improved tracheotomy tube, and various splints and appliances for use in orthopædic surgery, which have proved of the highest value to the profession and of remarkable utility in the treatment of deformities.

During Dr. Sayre's first visit to Europe, in 1871–1872, he was created a Knight of the Order of Wasa by Charles IV., of Sweden, in recognition of his valuable services to science, the king being personally cognizant of the accuracy of his method of diagnosis, and the success of his modes of treatment through the skill displayed by him in the case of a member of the royal family, whom he was called upon to attend. The Medical Society of Norway concurred in this action of the Swedish monarch by electing Dr. Sayre an honorary member.

Dr. Sayre is yet engaged in the various labors of his profession, with a skill that has been heightened by years of experience and a vigor that has been strengthened by the success that has followed his labors in the past. In practice, in teaching to others the knowledge he has learned, and with his pen, he is benefitting mankind through divers channels, and adding to the fame that was long since secure. In addition to the positions already enumerated, he is consulting surgeon to St. Elizabeth's Hospital and to the Northwestern Dispensary; and a member of the American Medical Association; the New York Academy of Medicine; the County Medical Society; New York County Medical Association; New York State Medical Association; the New York Pathological Society, of which he has been President; an honorary member of the New Brunwsick Medical Society; and also an honorary member of those great European bodies, the British Medical Association, the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh, and the Medical Society of St. Petersburg, Russia. He has been too busy in his profession to accept any positions of a civic or political character, except a service from 1845 to 1861 as surgeon general of the first division of the New York Militia.

Dr. Sayre's great success in his profession, as has already been said, is due primarily to a natural gift made effective in hard work; while the special features of that success are an accuracy of observation, clearness and decision in making his diagnosis, promptness in execution when neces-

sity requires, and the courage to do what he thinks ought to be done, and to abide by the consequences. A conversationalist of the highest order, social in his intercourse with his friends, approachable by all, a student and thinker as well as a worker, and glad to do all the good that lies within his power, he has been and is one of the leaders in the great world of medicine and surgery. The position to which he has attained can be described in no better words, and certainly from no greater authority, than to quote the conclusion of the remarks made by the eminent Dr. S. D. Gross of Philadelphia, before the class of Bellevue Hospital Medical College, on January 10, 1880, as stenographically reported by G. F. Gundrum. Dr. Gross said :

" Dr. Sayre has done wonders in the field of surgery. He has not only made a fame for himself throughout the civilized world, but has also made a fame for the nation. I shall probably not be here when he shall pass away, to write his biography —as I am a number of years older than he—to tell the world of his wonderful achievements ; but he will need none, for the world is already his biographer. It has erected to him a monument more durable than marble or brass !"